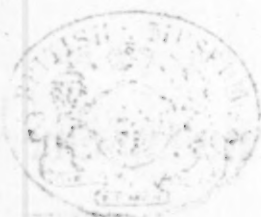

A
COURSE
OF
LECTURES
FOR
Sunday Evenings.

VOL. II.



A
COURSE
OF
LECTURES
FOR
Sunday Evenings;
CONTAINING
RELIGIOUS ADVICE
TO
YOUNG PERSONS.

VOL. II.

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J. F. COLEMAN

JOHN COLEMAN

JOHN COLEMAN



VOL. II.

NO. 2007

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SUNDAY XIV.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY PIETY.

WHEN I consider the importance of your religious principles, I cannot avoid being solicitous to impress them strongly on your minds. The happiness of this life, and the hope of futurity, depend upon your present character. If the seeds of virtue are not sown in youth, no fruit can be expected in age. Every hour which is now lost to improvement, is an irreparable disadvantage

to each succeeding period. The time which elapses to-day in negligence or folly, no future wishes can recal, nor future diligence repair: because, however repentance may bewail neglect, or vigilance endeavour to atone for past misconduct, yet no industry can renew that opportunity which you have once suffered to escape. Reflect, therefore, with the serious attention which such considerations ought to inspire, that every hour now wasted in frivolous pursuits, diminishes the space allotted for your preparation for eternity; and must lessen that share of glory and happiness you were created to enjoy hereafter. Think, therefore, with awful veneration, on the present period of your existence. Life is now, as it were, a blank before you. The surrounding multitudes of Earth and Heaven are intent on your conduct, to observe the course you will pursue. May it be yours, my young reader, to make the best determination, that you will "Remember your Creator in the days of your youth." The interests of this life are uncertain; and must soon terminate for ever. But the duties of religion constantly attended, and invariably pursued, will secure your present peace, and establish a just ground of confidence for eternal felicity.

LET me urge you, therefore, with that warmth which the subject demands, to form a steady resolution of regulating your conduct in every instance, by the sacred laws of rectitude and virtue. Consider, that to delay your attention to what is necessary, will increase the difficulties of the execution. How animating is the design of setting forward with the noble hope of being an example to others, and of engaging the care of your Maker, by an early self-dedication to his service.

I SUPPOSE you to be now of an age soon to renew, in your own behalf, the covenant which was made in your name at your baptism: and, that after having been instructed in the obligations you owe to God, and to society, you are disposed to promote your own happiness, by a voluntary acceptance of that solemn engagement. From this time, therefore, you begin to establish your character in life. And how greatly is it in your power to promote the cause of religion, and revive the spirit of piety and goodness in all around you. You know not how long you may be spared to the world; and this uncertainty should excite your diligence to improve, to the best advantage, the time now lent you by Heaven. Your friends expect the comfort of their

remaining days from your merit and excellence: your country's highest hopes of future prosperity, must depend on the virtues of the rising generation, and each one who is added to the number of the *Good*, is an additional guard to save it from impending calamity; since they engage the Divine favour as their peculiar protection. Let me warn you not to be content with inferior attainments; but let the ardor of youth be directed to its proper end, and enkindle the sacred inclination to be first in all that is praise-worthy. "Whatsoever things are pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise," let them excite you to persevere in well-doing.

THOUGH you are not far advanced in life; yet, my young friend, there are already numbers rising around you, who will regard your example as the model they will hereafter copy; and those who are of an age to be your present companions, may owe (through the divine blessing) their future establishment in virtue to your advice, assistance, and example.

THE great Governor of the universe has endowed all his rational creatures with talents capa-

ble of improvement : and it is impossible to ascertain to what a height of excellence the human powers may reach. As the faculties of the body acquire strength and vigor in proportion as they are used, so the faculties of the mind, may doubtless be greatly exalted by diligence and perseverance. Every thing that is *difficult* is not impossible. If you are discouraged by the prospect of labour and fatigue, you will never rise to eminence and glory. The prize which is adjudged to merit, must be won by industry. But remember, for your encouragement, that you toil not for perishable, but an incorruptible reward. Good habits may be formed by resolution and care, and evil dispositions are to be corrected by the same means ; and good habits, by degrees, ripen into active virtue, and establish the character of the Christian.

THE dedication of your best days to the service of your Maker, is the most pleasing sacrifice you can ever offer up before him ; and be persuaded, that he will regard it as an acceptable oblation. If you quit the paths of virtue in youth, you will labour under almost insurmountable difficulties when you desire to return : and believe the experience of all ages, when you are

assured, that however joyfully you may begin the career of folly, you will find it is embittered by shame and remorse as you proceed : and, when you wish to leave the ways of wickedness, distress and anguish will unavoidably attend you. For though you may *sin* with pleasure, you cannot *repent* without pain. Must it not then be the highest proof of folly, to engage in such a course of action as will unavoidably subject your future hours to regret ? and whenever you are seduced into a deviation from duty, you lay the foundation for certain misery ; since your *best* hopes must be placed in the penitence and reformation of succeeding years. You cannot, surely, yield to the temptation of guilt, with the intention of meeting the supreme Judge without repentance ; nor would the most daring transgressor violate the divine law, but under the expectation of a reconciliation with his Maker, before he entered into his more immediate presence. And can the tears of remorse, the vexation of self-reproach, and the fearful terror of eternal punishment be so desirable, that you will risk the hope of Heaven on the prospect of an uncertain repentance ? I allow that there are difficulties to be encountered in the progress of virtue ; but those who begin the race with commencement of life, will escape the most formidable evils, and the severest opposition.

They will proceed with increasing delight, as they advance in their progress; and the retrospect of the past will afford fresh encouragement for their ensuing trials. While, on the contrary, those who have been led astray, and have unhappily followed a "multitude to do evil," will experience, that the assaults of inclination are strengthened by continued habit; and will find, that a higher degree of resolution is necessary to break the bands of wickedness at once, than to persevere in well-doing.

THE season of youth is, in every respect, peculiarly important. It is the period in which the foundation of every future excellence must be laid; it is the time best adapted to, and most capable of, improvement. The natural and mental powers are then fitted to the acquirement of knowledge, and the docility of temper usually attendant on the early hours of life, render that time particularly favourable to every good impression. Neglect not, then, my young friends, the golden opportunity, which, once elapsed, will *never* return. The forfeiture of your innocence, no power in the universe can restore; your transgressions may be pardoned through the merits of the Redeemer; but you can never regain the satisfaction of looking back with delight on the

days of your youth. The recollection of your sins will continue to goad you through the succeeding stages of your journey, and cast a gloomy shade of apprehension and sorrow over your final hour. The consequence of your example will be lessened to the world, while the memory of your evil actions are remembered to your disadvantage; and the principles of piety in your own bosom will be shaken, by the common sophistry, of attempting to justify a wrong conduct, by the false reasoning of deceitful argument. With a design to assist your endeavours in the practice of habitual goodness, the following pages are submitted to your perusal; and if through their means you are led to serious consideration, or strengthened in any laudable resolutions, the author will be happy in the success of the plan, which was designed entirely for the benefit of the youthful reader.

SUNDAY XV.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

THERE is no higher incentive to great actions, than the contemplation of those examples who have been renowned for heroic virtues, and who have exhibited the principles they taught by a conformable conduct. In this view, the life of our divine Redeemer, will at all times afford instances of such excellence, as will be a perfect model for imitation. No human character is without some defect; and, perhaps, while you admire what is worthy, you may, by the weakness of partial prejudice, be led to copy what is improper. But in every action of the Messiah, you behold the amiable effects of virtue unallayed by frailty. For though he was in all points tempted *like as we are*, it was without sin. Yet, perhaps, while you allow the merit of this divine pattern, you will be apt to consider it as beyond the sphere of your emulation, and may object, that

the *Son of God* cannot be proposed to your imitation, since he was possessed of powers and abilities more than human. But do not the Scriptures inform you, that one of the reasons for which he took our nature upon him was, "To leave us an example that we should follow his steps." "Be ye therefore," says the apostle, "followers of God as dear children, and walk in love, as *Christ* also hath loved us. And many of the actions of his life were performed, as himself informs us, that we should do likewise. It may not therefore be improper to trace out some particulars, wherein young persons may imitate their divine master, and fulfil the sacred covenant, of fighting under the banner against the world, the flesh, and the devil.

AND first, as the grace of *humility* is so peculiarly amiable at your age, you will find this lowly virtue distinguish the conduct of our Saviour through every part of his life. Although he was in the beginning with God, and all things were made by him, yet he condescended to be born without any of those distinctions which the vanity of mankind are so apt to desire; to prove to his disciples, that outward accommodations, and external pomp, have in themselves no real value;

but that the dispositions of the *heart* only are regarded by him “who seeth not as men seeth.” Whatever, therefore, may be your situation in the world, *Jesus Christ* has taught you, that the highest virtues may be obtained in the most indigent station. He has ennobled poverty, by sharing its necessities; and has led the way to glory through the path of humiliation. Be not ashamed of these circumstances which he has sanctified, nor fear the contempt of the world, since your Saviour also has experienced its frowns. If, on the other hand, it has pleased your heavenly Maker to exalt you above others, by appointing you to an elevated rank in life; the prince of Peace has taught you condescension to your inferiors in the most direct and striking manner, when he stooped to wash the feet of his disciples; as if to impress humility on his followers by one of his last acts, “when he knew that his hour was come that he should depart unto his father,” and that he was then going to be exalted, as a recompence for his obedience and sufferings; “Knowing, therefore, that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God;” he rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poured water into a bason, and began to

wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. So when he had finished, and had taken his garments, and was sat down again, he said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord : and ye say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord, nor he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things happy are ye if ye do them."

THOUGH these words were immediately addressed to the apostles, yet they were recorded for our instruction ; and whoever is inclined to despise another because he is inferior, either in fortune or understanding, should remember this example of *Christ*. The difference which subsists between the highest rank, and the most destitute condition, is not so great as we behold between our Redeemer and those whom he thus humbled himself to serve. Be not ashamed, therefore, my young friend, to behave with kindness and affability to all whom Providence has placed beneath you. Remember, that you are equally depend-

ent on the same bounty, and that, as he has exalted, so is he at all times able to abase you. "For the most high God ruleth in the kingdom of men, and appointed over it whomsoever he will." The force of example has ever been esteemed superior to the wisest admonitions. There is an imitation of soul which arises in the contemplation of great actions, that inspires a desire of animation; and while we contemplate the image of virtue in the exertions of active life, the mind is raised, in some measure, to partake of those sentiments which are the foundation of what it applauds. In the conduct of our divine Master, we are shown, what human nature was designed to be; and the more we copy this exalted pattern of excellence, the nearer shall we approach to the perfection of our being. In every action of his exemplary life, you behold the model which his followers should imitate: patient to the infirmities, and gentle and forbearing to the sufferings of others: he had no failings of his own to claim excuse, yet was he pitiful and candid to the wayward temper of his disciples; and bore with their dullness, inattention, and neglect without reproach. Nor was this meekness the effect of mean servility, or timid weakness. He had no fear of displeasing others, when his

character and duty obliged him to reprove. He rebukes the Pharisees, and drives those from the temple who had polluted its sacred courts by their unhallowed traffic. With all the ardor of zeal for his Father's glory, he asserts the respect which is due to the place of divine worship; and proclaims his just indignation for its insulted honour. By this testimony he exhibits the true distinction of a noble spirit, which is unmoved by the negligence or provocation that affects vulgar minds; and is above the resentment of injuries done to itself: but is warm and steady in its resistance to the enemies of God and religion. He will not listen to the angry advice of his apostles, and call down fire from Heaven to punish those who would not receive him; but he maintains his own dignity, and the majesty of his Father, in the last and trying scenes which preceded his death. To the *Roman* governor he boldly says, he could not have that power which he boasted, to acquit or condemn him, unless it was given him from above. With the same intrepid firmness he asserts his character and mission to the high priest and assembled Jews, who were met together to contrive his destruction. With undisturbed composure he hears their false accusations, nor is provoked to return one single expression of anger to all their ungenerous insults.

But when asked, “ Art thou the *Christ*, the Son of the Blessed ?” He replies, with the fortitude of true courage, “ I am : and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.” He well knew that this noble acknowledgment was what alone his enemies desired, to justify their pretended evidence against him. But he was called to bear witness to the truth ; and though assured that the hour of his final sufferings was at hand, he withheld not that open confession which would hasten its approach. Thus did he instruct his followers, in the most trying and perilous seasons, to be unmoved in their integrity, to bear all the violence of malicious power, and the revilings of undeserved abuse, without any return ; and with the silence of submissive resignation, wait the proper occasion to vindicate and assert their insulted innocence.

SURELY, my young reader, you must admire this bright example of your Redeemer, as you peruse the history of his life. That life which presents a series of poverty, sufferings, and persecutions, and which was concluded by a painful and ignominious death. When you trace the annals of history, it cannot but delight you to

meet with characters who were renowned in the age in which they lived, and whose memory is transmitted to posterity with the fame of having excelled in virtue. Yet the records of the most faithful historian are in some measure doubtful, compared with the authentic testimony of the gospel of truth. But admitting their validity as unquestioned, still you are not concerned in the recital, any further than the common interest which the human mind must feel for the fate of superior worth. In the pathetic account of your Redeemer's actions, you read the relations of facts the most indisputable, which were designed as a perfect copy for *your* imitation. The agonies which they represent, were sustained for *your* sake, and voluntarily endured by the divine sufferer, with the benevolent design of expiating *your* offences.

IF any motive can touch the susceptible heart; if any subject can interest the principle of self-love; if the improvement of time, or the fate of eternity is important; if duty can bind, or gratitude urge your consideration, the example of *Christ* must have influence, and engage your endeavours to tread in his steps.

SUNDAY XVI.

ON THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

THE great Creator of the world, has with infinite kindness, provided for the comfort and happiness of all his creatures. But, as the interests of the soul are much more important than the concerns of the body, he has, in a particular manner, secured our virtue, by the promulgation of such laws, as if observed would ensure to mankind the highest comforts of the present state, and fit them for the enjoyment of eternal felicity after death. With the benevolent intention, that every rational being should be acquainted with the rules of duty, and the path of rectitude; he has given us a law written in our hearts, that the most ignorant and uninstructed may discern good from evil, and, by this inward sense, be led to avoid what is wicked, and to chuse what is praise-worthy in action. This internal feeling of the mind, is the *power of conscience*, which the almighty governor of the

world has bestowed on each individual, as a preservative from error, and a guide to virtue; and its secret influence is acknowledged, as soon as we are capable of thought and reflection. Conscience is a judge in our own bosoms, and can, by the appointment of God, punish the most secret crime with inward uneasiness and distress; while every good action, nay, every good *intention*, is rewarded with such serene self-approbation, as may serve for our immediate recompence.

BUT we are apt to neglect the admonitions of this silent monitor, although our happiness entirely depends on a constant attention to its dictates. "God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things; but if our hearts," that is, our conscience, "condemn us not, then may we have confidence towards God." You, my young reader, who are just setting out on the journey of life, should most invariably attend to the apostle's example, and endeavour to have always a "conscience void of offence." You must, whatever is your situation in the world, have already experienced its power. When you have committed a wilful fault, you have found the regret and shame of your own mind has immediately succeeded the offence, although it was

acted in secret, and no human witness could detect the crime. God is present everywhere; and your conscience is the judge he has commissioned to acquit or condemn you, while in the state of being. Our *actions* are subject to the censure or applause of mankind, and their decision may, from various causes, be unjust: but our *thoughts*, and the motives which constitute our real merit, are known only to God and our own hearts.

It is possible you may have been most warmly commended for such parts of your conduct, as, having proceeded from a base intention, were deserving of reproof. In such a case, have you not felt an internal shame, which has converted that undeserved praise into the keenest reproach? These natural sensations of the mind are alike in *all*, unless perverted by an obstinate continuance in guilt; and I would hope, that none of those to whom these pages are addressed, have arrived at so dreadful a state of depravity. The remonstrances of conscience may be partially subdued, by a determined resolution to continue in a course of wickedness; but even the most hardened offender must experience intervals of remorse; and there are some reasons of reflection, when conscience *will* be heard, and make the most un-

thinking tremble. May you, my young reader, be persuaded, on all occasions, to attend to the soft whispers of that power implanted within you.

CONSIDER the reproaches of your own mind as the warning voice of heaven, and endeavour to keep “your heart tender,” if you would obtain the approbation of your God. The sense of duty is improved by the advantage of superior knowledge; and the benefit of divine revelation has enlightened the human mind, and directed you to a certain and unerring rule of life. But *St. Paul* informs us, that God had given conscience as a law to the most ignorant and darkest ages, and that hereafter they will be judged by that law, as they were not acquainted with any higher authority. This law, as he expresses it, “being written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another.” Consider, therefore, that this sacred principle is sanctified to you by the clearer doctrine of revelation. You are born in the most enlightened age of true religion, and have the advantage of Christian parents, and of religious instruction: and though in the former times of ignorance God (we are told in the Scriptures) was willing to

excuse, "yet now commandeth he all men every where to repent;" because now our ignorance must be wilful, and therefore unpardonable. Endeavour, as you possess such superior blessings, and such certain information, to act up to the high character you bear as "a member of *Christ*, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of Heaven."

THE law of the Gospel does not annul, but strengthens and directs the power of conscience; and, by this mean, we are enabled to apply its important instructions to the direction of our conduct, in the daily instances of social life. It remains, therefore, that you seek at all times to be well informed; and, as far as possible, to banish prejudice and passion from your judgment: and then attend seriously to the suggestions of conscience, as you will answer it at the awful day of judgment. With such impressions on your mind, it is scarcely possible to fall into atrocious crimes. Human nature is frail, and the best disposed may be surprised into error; but under a constant and habitual sense of God's presence, and a strict attention to the voice of conscience, you will be in a state, of all others, most favourable to good impressions, and the most likely to engage the succours of divine grace. Amidst

the circumstances that occur in common life, you may not be able easily to recollect, or apply the sacred instructions contained in the Scriptures. The secret impulse of conscience will supply this defect of reflection, and enable you immediately to determine on a judicious conduct. If you be tempted to an ungenerous or an evil action, you will consult your own feelings, and ask yourself, What is kind, noble, or just in the situation in which you are placed? and as your heart shall determine, so endeavour to act; and, you may be assured, you will not be in danger of any great error, if you be truly honest in attending its decision.

THIS sacred principle is particularly strong in the early part of life, as yet unimpaired by the force of bad example; and is intended by your Creator as an immediate guard to virtue, before the powers of reason have attained their full maturity. Happy would it be for mankind, if they would cherish and improve this tenderness of heart, and by a constant attention to its first suggestion, save themselves from succeeding guilt and consequent remorse.

THOSE, who have the advantage of a good education, may profit by the advice of their pa-

rents and instructors ; and reap the fruits of experience, without sharing the pain of its acquirements. But there is a general propensity in youth, to disregard the affectionate solicitude of the wisest counsellors, and to follow their own inclinations, even at the expence of their future happiness.

IN the present instance, however, I may venture to apply to yourself ; for, surely, my young friend, you are already sensible of the power of conscience. Let your memory recollect those instances of conduct, in which you have transgressed any acknowledged duty, or omitted the performance of some incumbent obligation. Have you disobeyed the commands of your parents ? been guilty of fraud, artifice, or dissimulation ? have you been unreasonable in your expectation ? behaved with obstinacy, sullenness, or determined malice ? have you neglected your religious duties, either from indolence or pleasure ? whatever crimes you are conscious of, and, however undiscovered they may remain ; yet, did you not, on such occasions, find the truth of *Solomon's* observation, that, “ the spirit (or innocence) of a man will sustain his infirmity ; but a wounded spirit who can bear ? ” On this subject, therefore, you may, in some degree,

form a judgment from your own conviction. You are not called upon to trust to the sentiments of more venerable authority, but to believe *your own feelings*, and to rely on your past experience.

THE voice of nature, in its most simple state, bore testimony to the power of conscience; and the doctrine of revealed religion has confirmed this awful sentiment of former ages, and established its judgment in the human breast. However you may neglect its reproaches, or act in opposition to its friendly council, you must be unhappy whenever you deserve its censure; since God will ratify and confirm that sentence which conscience, as his delegate, shall pronounce.

SUNDAY XVII.

ON THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

AS we cannot escape the sense of guilt, nor avoid the reproaches of conscious remorse, it should be our care, by constant watchfulness, to secure the peace of an innocent mind. This greatest comfort is independent of the world; it is a satisfaction which its highest enjoyments cannot bestow, nor the most severe frowns of adverse fortune deprive us of. If you should be exalted, even by royal dignity, and distinguished by the splendid pomp of the proud monarch of *Babylon*, yet the hand-writing on the wall, or the stings of a guilty conscience, would have power to suspend your mirth in the gayest scenes of festivity.

THE Almighty in this instance has made all his rational creatures on a level. The convenience of riches, and the ostentation of greatness, may excite the desires of the young and incon-

siderate ; but though such advantages contribute to our comfort (if well applied) they cannot insure happiness : and numberless instances, both in sacred and profane history, have established this truth, and attested it by the strongest examples.

THE Roman governor, though attended with pomp, and placed on the tribunal of Judgment, could not resist his inward emotions ; but while his degraded *prisoner* stood before him, dependent on his power, and subject to his command, he was himself arranged at the bar of conscience, and as the “ apostles reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, *Felix* trembled.”

WHAT a striking contract does this incident exhibit, between the confidence of integrity, and the terrors of guilt. *St. Paul*, oppressed with the fetters of bondage, accused by his enemies, and thrown into an ignominious confinement, is brought before the representative of *Cæsar* ; who, surrounded by his guards, in all the majesty of state, beckons to the victim of malice to plead for himself. With the simplicity of innocence, and the conviction of truth, he defends his cause, and confronts his accusers : for he must ever be above

the fear of human power, who can make this modest, though glorious assertion, "That herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men." Undaunted by the false accusations of the malicious Jews, and unintimidated by the presence of *Felix*, who favoured their design; he boldly confesses, that "after the way which they called heresy, so worshipped he the God of his fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets: and having hope toward God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust."

THE knowledge of this future retribution, it may be supposed, was what appalled the soul of *Felix*, when he again sent for the apostle, "and heard him concerning the faith in *Christ*." He was convicted by the reproaches of conscience; and, through he trembled with present remorse, yet he was unwilling to listen to the salutary admonition; he could not bear the force of *St. Paul's* convincing arguments, and therefore was eager to dismiss him with the answer, "Go thy way for this time; when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee."

I will not, at present, further pursue the history of *Felix*, though it is well worthy your attention; but will entreat you to observe the noble confidence of *St. Paul* in this interesting transaction, as recorded in the twenty-second, and four following chapters of Acts. The guilty, will, like the *Roman* governor, tremble in the most magnificent palace; while the virtuous, with the great apostle of the Gentiles, will be self-collected, calm, and intrepid, in the gloom of a prison.

You, my young friend, to whom these pages are addressed, have the whole of life before you; if your opening days have been gilded with the sun-shine of prosperity, remember that *Virtue* only has the power to render exterior blessings truly valuable. You may possess *fortune* without *happiness*; but, in every condition, a *good conscience* is an essential requisite to enjoyment.

WITH this valuable provision secured, whatever storms may hereafter arise, you will be prepared to meet them with manly fortitude. The affairs of life often fluctuate and change; but he who is at peace within, has a steady principle of comfort, on which outward accidents have no power. "If our heart condemn us not, then

have we confidence toward God."—Confidence, that he will uphold you in prosperity with his blessing, and make your earthly enjoyments the earnest of future felicity;—confidence in his mercy in the time of trial, that if his wisdom allot you to a state of poverty, you shall still be rich in his favour, and in your hope of a heavenly inheritance:—you will have confidence of God, if your friends be removed by death, that he will supply their loss by his protection; and, however destitute your situation, however deserted and hopeless your worldly prospects may appear, yet you have this best consolation to support you, that you may "cast all your care on him," who hath declared that, "he careth for you."

A good conscience, is in some degree, the foundation of faith. It is an internal assent to the truth of the Gospel, and may be compared to the good ground mentioned to one of our Saviour's parables; which being in a proper state to receive the seed when sown, brought forth some fifty, and some a hundred-fold increase. Thus, many excellent characters among the heathen philosophers, have proved the law written on their hearts; and by the distinguished virtues of a good life, have evinced, that they were a law

unto themselves. Such men would have received the instructions of revelation with satisfaction, gratitude and affiance. On the minds of a *Cato*, a *Socrates*, or a *Seneca*, the truths of revelation would have had full power; because, having nothing to fear from the expectation of a future state, they would readily have embraced those doctrines, which, clearing away the uncertainty of doubt, would have opened to them the assured knowledge of a life after death. Having lived conformably to the dictates of conscience, though unenlightened by superior information, they would have apprehended no terrors from a religion, which teaches the comfortable doctrine of pardon to the penitent, and peace to the returning prodigal. Pardon and peace purchased to mankind through the mercies of God, and the merits and sufferings of his Son. While the hypocritical Pharisees, who were desirous that all their good deeds should be performed in the sight of men; with a view to acquire a reputation of piety, made long prayers, and affected much appearance of sanctify and outward austerity; yet they, as false professors of religion, persecuted the Messiah, and rejected his instructions. “They appeared unto men to fast,” and our Saviour assures us, “they *had* their reward;” which implies, that as they performed the duties of devo-

tion and abstinence, only to gain the applause of the world, they must be contented with the veneration of the multitude : since they would receive no recompence from God : for he esteems the virtues of the *heart*, and not the outward adorations of hypocrisy.

THE Scribes, or expounders of the Mosaic law, opposed the preaching of *Christ* from a similar cause. And although their office consisted in reading and explaining to the people that very law which was to be perfected by the coming of the Messiah ; yet having perverted its precepts, insisting only on the *ceremonial* part, and neglecting to observe the weightier matters of *judgment*, *mercy*, and *truth*, so from this corruption of heart they renounced “ the holy one, and the just,” and crucified the Lord of life.

But the pious *Nathaniel*, whom our Saviour pronounced “ to be a man without guile,” was soon convinced of the truth of his mission, and readily made the candid acknowledgment, “ Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of *Israel*.”

HENCE you may learn the agreement between a good conscience and sound principles. That

as the moral laws of equity, truth, and virtue, were implanted in the mind of man by his Creator, so the Christian system does not contradict, but *raises, completes, and establishes* it by higher motives; ascertains the hope of a future recompence to the just, and of punishment to the wicked; and finishes, by the glorious plan of redemption through *Christ*, the scheme of eternal goodness in the formation of man.

opposed the law, and the law was to be perfected by the coming of the Messiah; yet, having perverted its precepts, insisting only on the ceremonial part, and neglecting to observe the weightier matters of judgment, mercy, and truth, he from the corruption of heart they announced "was only one, and the just," and crucified the Lord of life.

But the pious Matthew, whom our Saviour pronounced "to be a man without guile," was soon convinced of the error of his mission, and readily made the candid acknowledgment, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."

Alas! how soon we learn the agreement between a good conscience and sound philosophy. That

SUNDAY XVIII.

ON THE POWER OF CONSCIENCE.

AS man is a being formed for immortality, he must be anxiously solicitous to know in what state he shall exist, when he leaves the present. And the Scriptures have satisfied this important inquiry of the assurance, that as God has raised up his Son from the dead, so he will raise us up also by him. Nor are we left in doubt as to the particulars of the situation which will be then assigned us. The righteous, we are expressly told, shall rise to everlasting life, or the *happiness* of everlasting life;) and the wicked to shame and everlasting contempt. The testimony of conscience, will, therefore, be further useful in informing the mind, on what foundation its further hopes may with certainty be placed; and how far, consistent with the promises of God, it may reasonably expect eternal felicity.

THE Gospel of *Christ* is the only mean of salvation, and the clearest revelation of the will

of God, which he has given to mankind; and we are there positively assured, "that if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

CAN any information be more important to our happiness? The uncertainty of life is evinced in the daily experience of every one. We see numbers fall around us in the bloom of youth, and with the florid appearance of health, which seemed the earnest of many years' earthly enjoyment: but the most robust constitution sinks into weakness, when disease invades the frame; and those whose strength appears to promise the longest continuance, are also easily removed, when the Almighty gives command to strike. However, as death is an event equally certain to all, if we are but prepared for its summons, the time of its arrival is of small importance.

THE fear of death is occasioned by sin, and the dread of future punishment distresses the soul with awful apprehensions. But if you would wish to escape the worst terrors of dissolution, examine into the state of your conduct, "prove your own selves," that so you may have boldness in the day of judgment. You may sincerely call to remembrance the general tenor of your

thoughts, behaviour, and actions, and must attend to the determination of conscience without partiality, otherwise you will deceive yourself, and build your expectation upon a wrong foundation. The subject is deserving your most serious consideration, as a false confidence, in a matter of such importance, is highly dangerous.

THE true state of your soul cannot be determined from a few particular actions: it must be known by comparing the usual bent of your disposition, with that rule of duty revealed in the Scriptures. Is your temper habitually gentle, meek, and submissive? Do you make it the great business of life to improve in all that is praise-worthy? Are you sincerely desirous of instruction? And do you exert your endeavours to practise those virtues which are recommended to your attention? In your present limited sphere of action do you consider an implicit obedience to your parents as one of the first and greatest of your social duties? Are you at all times solicitous to comply with their injunctions, and contribute to their happiness? Do you endeavour to subdue every evil propensity which would interrupt your progress in a religious course? Are you careful to silence the rising

emotions of petulance, pride, sullenness, and passion? Do you accustom yourself to frequent reflections, and exert your vigilance to subdue those evil inclinations, which, if indulged, will be the destruction of your future peace, and the ruin of your eternal hopes? Are you assiduous in the cultivation of every generous principle, and do you labour to subdue that self-love which would lead you to a sordid preference of your own interest, in the neglect of every nobler consideration? Do you seek to promote the pleasure, and alleviate the uneasiness of every one with whom you are connected? And is the consciousness of divine observation, the constant and uniform motive to regulate your behaviour? Are you serious and attentive in your religious duties, and sincerely anxious to secure the favour of God, independent of earthly considerations? If, upon such an impartial review of your conduct, you have reason to conclude, that you have led a life of virtue, and that you continue your unremitted endeavours to reform every thing amiss in your temper, you have the most rational ground of self-satisfaction.

THE promises of the Gospel are made to every individual, upon the conditions of faith in *Christ*, and earnest endeavours of obedience to his laws.

And as God is immutable in his word, we may safely depend on the acceptance of our *sincere*, though imperfect service, through the merits of his Son ; because it is on those conditions he has engaged to receive his penitent and believing creatures, and to accept of the sufferings of our Redeemer, as a sufficient atonement for the sins of mankind.

THE decisions of conscience must, therefore, as I have before observed, be the only just foundation of your future hopes. That awful judge which the Almighty has placed within you, will now anticipate the sentence of acquittal or condemnation, which you will hear at the last great day of final retribution. Consider, therefore, from what has been said on the subject, how much it concerns you to regulate the whole of your conduct upon the principles of religion and virtue. I appeal to the conviction of your heart, that it is necessary for your present comfort ; since, however you may be misled by the example of licentious manners, or your sentiments perverted by libertine opinions, "God has not left himself without witness ;" and you have experienced, and will find, whenever you degenerate into guilt, that the internal feelings of

self-reproach, assert the presence and observation of the Deity, and fulfil the prophetic denunciation that "there is no peace to the wicked." When therefore you are disposed to silence the reasonings of this inward director, or to doubt the necessity of virtue and religion, allow your heated passions a moment's time for reflection; and you will be convinced, from conscious experience, that there is a power above, who directs that power within you, and who, in defiance of evil prejudice, the ardent wishes of guilt, and the false sophistry of infidelity, will make you *feel* its authority, and dread the accomplishment of its award.

If your religious principles be in danger of being shaken by the conversation or example of others, examine carefully, whether your doubts of the truths of revelation do not arise from a desire to escape its awful denunciations; since vice will endeavour to deny those sanctions which arraign her evil propensities: and those, who can have no hopes of *happiness* in a future state, will be glad to resign its expectation, rather than incur the danger of a miserable eternity. But surely, when you consider that such a weak and false reliance is the usual source of infidelity, it should incline you to cultivate the virtues of the

heart, and, by conduct which may defy reproach, give your mind that generous and unprejudiced temper which is open to the impressions of truth.

As a conclusion to the subject, allow me again to remark, that the animating prospect of felicity beyond the grave, which is founded in the testimony of a good conscience, is a rational and calm support during all the vicissitudes of life; it inspires a pleasing trust, and a firm faith in the promises of God; and, while it proves the insufficiency of human strength, excites the warmest gratitude toward the Father of mercies, and the benevolent Saviour of men; conveys that "peace of God which passeth all understanding," and, in the last struggles of departing nature, is a cordial to the anxious spirit, which, under the influence of divine grace, will render serene and joyful that solemn period of existence.

SUNDAY XIX.

ON QUARRELLING AND CONTENTION.

IN the present state of Being it will happen, says our blessed Master, "that offences come, but woe to him through whom they come; it were better for him that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea." And surely this may be said with truth of those contentious spirits, who are ever ready to take affront at the conduct of others, and careless in what manner they regulate their own. Such a disposition must be unhappy in itself, and communicate its malignant influence to all around.

He who is displeased with his companion or friend, cannot behave to him with courteousness and affability. He is ready to misinterpret his most innocent words, and misconstrue his most inoffensive actions; and the same circumstance

will enkindle his resentment when under the power of ill-humour, which, in a happier moment, would pass unobserved, or perhaps meet with full approbation.

It is impossible but that offences will come. You cannot expect, my young friend, that the opinion of your companions will always be regulated by your taste; nor is your judgment at all times dictated by prudence, and the result of wisdom. Each individual will, in turn, submit to the sway of capricious humours, and stand in need of allowance for those failings which they censure in the conduct of others: whenever, therefore, you feel a disposition to be captious and petulant, recollect that your temper is then in that state, which is most likely to mislead your judgment. Your companion may be to blame; but cool impartiality is not to be expected from a disposition heated by passion, or subject to the irritation of peevish disgust. Wait for the calmer moment of reflection, and then seriously examine, whether your own conduct has been free from error. If you have said any thing with a design to provoke the offending person, you may be sure you are reprehensible. If your conscience convict you of having increased the resentment of your companion, by your looks,

your words, or your actions, it should put you on your guard for the future, and engage you the most readily to forgive a fault of which you have at least partaken; and in almost every misunderstanding between friends, it will be found upon examination, that *both* parties are in some degree to blame. Things in themselves of trifling consequence, are usually the foundation of contention. And those who are willing to foment disagreement, will never be without a cause of quarrel. But, my dear reader, as you prize the felicity of your future life:—as you value the approbation of the good, the esteem of the wise, and the love of mankind in general:—as you hope for favour from the omniscient Judge of all, be persuaded to guard your heart, with the utmost caution, from this detestable propensity.

ONE word of discord may rise a spark of animosity, which no future period may be able to extinguish. “Blessed are the *peace-makers*,” says our Lord, “they shall be called the children of God;” for he delighteth in the happiness of all his creatures. Anger and resentment dispose the mind to jealousy and suspicion. From those with whom we are displeased, we naturally expect ill-will in return: we are ready, as it were,

to anticipate their dissatisfaction, because we feel that discordant principle toward them. And if you have ever experienced this evil inclination, you must be conscious that it is the author of misery.

A HEART at peace with itself, and pleased with all its connections, is the seat of calm delight and serene happiness. You take pleasure in the society of those you sincerely love, rejoice in every incident which affords them comfort, and those gentle feelings of good-nature revert back, with redoubled satisfaction, to your own bosom. "Be not easily provoked," says the Apostle; and it is a needful caution to young persons, who are too apt to be offended without cause, and to return expressions of resentment without reflection.

If your companions be peevish and uncomplying, it will not render them more agreeable should you vex and provoke them in return; for if "a soft answer turneth away wrath," the grievous words of displeasure certainly stir up anger. Be convinced also, that when you look back on what gave rise to the quarrel, and calmly consider the part you have acted, many words which you might then regard as highly

provoking, will appear to have been spoken without any design of offence; and perhaps you will discover, that you have deserved that censure which you bestow on your companion.

IF the disagreement should happen (as is but too often the case) between you and your brothers or sisters, reflect seriously on the near relation in which you stand to each other. You are children of the same parents, united by the will of your Creator, and bound by the ties of mutual interest to promote each other's welfare. How shameful is contention between those who are placed in a situation which ought to inspire the highest degree of concord and agreement.

PERHAPS you may urge, that your disputes are not of any serious consequence, and that you have a very tender love for each other, although you sometimes differ in opinion; that such trifling quarrels do not diminish your affection, but that you cannot bear to be imposed on by your companion.

EXCUSE me, my young friend, if I presume to doubt the truth of the assertion. Love is not to be increased by opposition and disunion. Examine your own heart, and consider impar-

tially, whether, after any difference where your peace has been offended, your temper ruffled, and your inclination opposed, you feel the same tenderness toward the object of your resentment, as you would have received from a mutual interchange of kind offices? And, believe me, it is a truth too often evinced by melancholy experience, that where cordial esteem and mild affection are not cultivated in early life, they seldom bloom in a more advanced age. If you neglect those little attentions, which, though insignificant in themselves, are of great importance toward conciliating the regard of those with whom you reside, the warm sentiments of fraternal love will be chilled by disgust, and that principle of natural friendship, which would have blessed your future days with the most heart-felt satisfaction, will be lost for ever, or succeeded only by a formal intercourse of cold civility. The Almighty seems to point out such near relations as the destined companions of your life: they have every advantage which can be a proper foundation for lasting union; as your equals in rank, as dependent on the same care, as surrounded by the same connexions, as accountable to the same parental authority, and frequently residing together, and pursuing the same course of study, or the same occupations and business.

With what anxious grief must it afflict the authors of your being, if they should perceive you break through all these tender ties, and, by childish contentions, or habitual ill-humour, lay the sad foundation for lasting dislike.

WHENVER you are tempted to engage in any kind of altercation, endeavour to restrain your anger for a few moments, and consider, whether the occasion of your displeasure will justify you in making yourself or your friends unhappy: whether it will recompense you for the sacrifice of your own temper, the love of those with whom you dispute, the approbation of your parents, the peace of your conscience, and the favour of your God.

You may probably object, that every degree of idle bickering does not deserve the serious epithet of a *quarrel*, or render you obnoxious to these severe penalties; but let me remind you, that many a dispute which was begun in jest, has ended in blood; that petulant expressions provoke a passionate reply, and that, as the wise man justly observes, "The beginnings of strife is like the letting out of water, that runneth apace."

IN general it may be asserted as a truth, that in every disagreement some expressions are used by each party, which upon reflection they have reason to regret. An unkind observation, or an unfriendly sentiment, is easily uttered at such a time; but when by *you* it is forgotten, it may continue to rankle in their hearts to whom it was addressed; and they will often recollect it to your disadvantage, when the difference which occasioned it is forgotten.

THIS observation should make you cautious of speaking at random, a custom to which some young persons are much addicted. From a natural warmth of temper, uncorrected by reflection, they express, without thought, all that passion may dictate, and, with a design to provoke, say every thing which occurs. Led on by a vivacity of spirits, ill applied, they delight in the most poignant strokes of satire: they will ridicule the mental defects or natural imperfections of their nearest relations and dearest friends, without considering the injury they are doing themselves; and, that while they sport with the feelings of others, they are losing their esteem, and lessening their regard.

God has so constituted our frame, that when

we give pain to others, we must wound ourselves. Thus, self-love becomes a guard to the peace of society: universal affection is the principle of universal happiness; and the more amiable you appear to others, the more agreeable will be your own sensations. When you are at variance with any one, you must be uncomfortable, as a generous disposition will be wretched, unless in harmony with all the world. If your heart is open to the tender emotions of sensibility, reflect on the ill consequence of a quarrelsome disposition, and if ever you are surprised into a dispute with any of your companions (especially if it be a brother or sister), endeavour to procure an immediate reconciliation. Do not be too proud to make the first concessions, although you may imagine yourself in the right: it is a small punishment for the commission of evil; and whoever is engaged in a quarrel, is in that very instance guilty of a fault.

If you part with enmity in your bosom, are you sure that you will meet again in peace? Life is uncertain to all, and youth will be no exemption from the grave. If a sudden stroke of Providence *should* remove the object of your displeasure, examine your heart, what would be then its sensations? Would not every unkind expression strike your mind with remorse? Would

not this disagreement be regarded as a most distressing event, and heighten your sorrow for the loss of the departed? Would not every remembrance of your past affection be tinged with regret, that it should have so bitterly concluded? And would it not aggravate your misery to think the offence could *never* be repaired? Such would be your feelings if you were the survivor. Think whether they would be more easy, if you were laid on the bed of death? Would a scene of contention be a proper preparation for eternity?

WE should always be prepared against a possible event; and whenever we retire to rest, should close our eyes in such a frame of mind, as we would wish to be found in at the awful summons to judgment.

SUNDAY XX.

ON SICKNESS.

IT is one of the first duties of humanity, to endeavour by those means in our power to alleviate distress, or to sooth the sufferer, whom we cannot otherwise assist. With a view to lighten the anguish of disease, by some considerations suitable to your situation, I would address you, my young friend, now you are confined to the gloomy chamber of sickness. Perhaps you may esteem it a very irksome and uncomfortable place, in comparison with those livelier scenes of festivity and pleasure to which you have been accustomed ; and though pain is equally an evil to all who feel its influence, yet it must be confessed, that the animated spirits of youth may find the restraints of weakness peculiarly burdensome. But there are motives sufficiently powerful to reconcile the mind to this stroke of affliction, when you consider, that

“whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,” and that this visitation may be sent in mercy, as a proof that you are under the care of Heaven.

It depends upon your own conduct to sanctify your sufferings to the noblest purpose; and by patient resignation to your heavenly Father, to make your present trial the mean of your everlasting felicity. The events which befall us are ordered by the best and most benevolent of all Beings; therefore, we may be assured, they are designed for our good; since he doth not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men.

THE sickness under which you at present labour, may be intended as an exercise of those virtues, you would otherwise have no opportunity of practising; and, by calling your patience into action, give you a glorious occasion of shewing to all about you an example of faith in God, and of obedience to his will. And as he knoweth our frame, and is perfectly acquainted with human weakness, so he regards with favour every attempt to suffer with quiet resignation, that anguish of body his wisdom sees it proper to inflict. When, therefore, you are overcome by the weakness of disease, or feel those acute

sensations of pain which incline you to loud lamentations or petulant complaints; endeavour to moderate the excessive indulgence, which persons in such circumstances are sometimes but too apt to allow themselves: recollect, that you cannot avoid or escape from that Power who thus afflicts you; but that as the wounds of disease come from the arrows of the Almighty, he hath also the means to heal. He watches over his afflicted children, with the tenderness of a compassionate father; and when with piety they implore him, he is ever ready to strengthen their fortitude, if not immediately to remove their troubles.

“TRUST, therefore, in the Lord; and he shall bring it to pass.” His mercy only can give success to the means which are used for your recovery; his wisdom must direct the physician’s skill; his energy bestow the gift of healing to every medicinal draught; and his blessing attend on the anxious cares of your affectionate friends, or all those advantages united will be ineffectual to remove your disorder. Whatever, then, is your situation in life, look up to God for ease and returning health.

If you possess those blessings which distin-

guish a state of affluence, be thankful for an advantage, which, in such a season of distress, must be doubly comfortable. Reflect how soothing are the endearments, how agreeable the attendance of those you love ! And though the bed of sickness is uneasy and irksome, yet thousands of your fellow-creatures, equal to you in excellence and virtue, “ have not where to lay their heads.” While you suffer the parching thirst of that fever which has infected your frame, think how many feel the same disorder with equal violence, without the alleviation of those cooling liquids, or lenient remedies, which give you so much relief. Let gratitude mingle with your complaints, when you consider how highly favoured is your lot ; and let your pity be extended to suffering poverty, from the reflection of your present feelings.

Your indisposition may give rise to the noble virtue of sympathy, and soften you heart to the commiseration of those evils in others, which you will best compassionate from experience. If Providence should spare your life, forget not what you now suffer ; and recollect, that if you are pleased with the attention of others, if you desire they should excuse your wearisome groans,

should be ready to supply your wants, and contribute to the amusement of your tedious hours, the same gentle forbearance will become *your* duty toward the sick and helpless. Remember of what you now stand most in need, and when health hath removed the pain of languishment, make it your endeavour through life, as far as your abilities extend, to succour those who require your assistance. Relieve the poor, by procuring such necessities as your power or interest can command ; and return the care of your parents and friends, by every attention which may recompense their love. Thus will you have reason to rejoice at this now afflictive dispensation, and bless the friendly sickness which has inclined your heart with greater sympathy to feel for the distressed.

THIS season of pain may be further serviceable to you, by engaging your reflections on the true value of life : for, my young friend, how insignificant do those amusements appear at present, which in the gayer moments of health you have regarded with such anxious expectation. Your taste can have little relish for the nicest dainties, and the liveliest strains of harmony would perhaps disturb and offend you ; outward ornaments and decorations must be equally

useless, while your frame is tormented with agony, or trembling with weakness. You find, therefore, that however riches and pleasure may add to the comforts of life, we must seek for some higher good to support us in the period of sorrow. The only thing which can then raise the dejected spirits, and enable us to sustain the trial of affliction, is the consciousness of having acted rightly, and the hope of acceptance with God.

WHEN we look back on our past actions without remorse, we have greater encouragement to implore the favour of Heaven : when we have remembered our Creator, been attentive to his laws, and prayed for his assistance while in health, we shall be more disposed to implore his blessing, and seek to him for relief in the melancholy hours of sickness : when goodness has once become habitual, it will have an effect on our conduct in every period of life ; and those who are thankful, pious, and humble in prosperity, will be cheerful, resigned, and patient in adversity. It behoves you, then, *quietly* to endure your present sufferings, and to prove yourself a disciple of *Christ*, by a meek submission to the state allotted you ; readily to follow the guidance of your friends, but chiefly to implore your God to

restore you to health, strength, and usefulness. Nor be alarmed, my young friend, if your disorder should resist the force of medicine, and threaten you with the approach of death.—Your fate is in the hands of a good and merciful father, who will do whatever he sees altogether best for you. Resign yourself, therefore, entirely unto his direction.

THOSE who love you best, are not so solicitous for your welfare, as he who has formed you from the womb. If he sees it proper *early* to remove you from life, he will take you to himself, and to endless and immortal happiness. The improvements which growing years might have bestowed upon you on earth, will be amply supplied to your soul in heaven. You will be spared the trials and temptations which longer life would have exposed you to, and which, perhaps, might have led you astray from the paths of virtue; and though you are obliged to quit your earthly friends, yet your God can supply every lost relation, restore them to you in a happier world.

ENDEAVOUR, while you continue in life, to bless your parents with the delightful prospect of every generous virtue: let your thankful grati-

tude to God and to them, evince your sense of his mercies, and of their tenderness: strive to suppress those complaints which must distress their affectionate hearts; and make them happy by such an easy temper of mind, and gentleness of manners, as may, whether you be removed from them, or spared to their prayers, give them occasion to rejoice.

“IF we suffer with *Christ* we shall also reign with him,” says the apostle; that is, if we bear our trials here, with the like patience which distinguished our Redeemer, we shall hereafter share in his reward, be exalted to that felicity which the worthy and the good shall enjoy, and be ranked with those “who through much tribulation have entered into the kingdom of God.”

BE not discouraged with the idea, that you are too young, or too useless an object to obtain the divine approbation: nor suffer yourself to imagine, that it is a matter of no consequence in what manner you sustain the disorder with which you are visited: “for God seeth not as man seeth: man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” If therefore, from a pious motive of duty, you check the murmurs

and complaints you would otherwise indulge;—if you endeavour to encourage religious reflections, to recollect what has been amiss in your conduct, to repent of your past errors, and resolve, by the grace of God, to amend your life if it be prolonged;—if you pray sincerely that his goodness would graciously promote your recovery, yet, with submission to his determination, either to live or to die;—if you strive to make this excellent use of your bodily weakness, it will certainly be attended with the happiest effects; it will promote a spirit of gratitude and obedience toward your Maker; incline you to honour, and thankfully acknowledge the love of your parents or assisting friends; make you more compassionate to the sufferings of your fellow-creatures in the like distress; convince your mind of the vanity of every worldly enjoyment; and excite your desire to become worthy of that felicity, which will crown all your virtues with an eternal recompence after this life is ended.

SUNDAY XXI.

ON RECOVERY FROM SICKNESS.

WHEN we labour under any painful or acute disorder, and human means are found insufficient to our relief, we are naturally led to implore the assistance of that Being whose power is equal to every emergency, and whose goodness inspires us with the hope, that our earnest application will succeed.

THIS truth, you, my young friend, must have fully experienced in the late visitation of Providence. While you lay on the bed of sickness did you not implore the Father of mercies to abate your uneasiness, to remove your distemper, and to bless you with a return of that ease and enjoyment, of the inestimable value of which you were then peculiarly sensible? And did not your parents and friends unite with you in those prayers, and in ardent wishes for your recovery?

Recal to your remembrance the scenes of anguish through which you have lately passed : if your sufferings were then severe, to whom are you indebted that you are now free from the attacks of pain, and that your strength is renewed from the depression of weakness ? Whose hand has preserved you in trouble, and restored you to the hopes of future life ? And surely, if God has prolonged your period of probation, and given you a renewed opportunity of instruction, you are engaged by gratitude to employ your added years in his service.

It is your duty to make the proper application of this gentle chastisement, and to consider what may be the probable ends for which it was inflicted. Perhaps your heavenly Father may have designed it as an exercise of your faith and patience ; as a gracious trial of your trust in his mercy, in those circumstances where all outward application, and human tenderness were ineffectual. It might be intended as a lesson to your youthful heart of the insufficiency of every other reliance, but a dependance upon your God ; and may teach you how weak and unsatisfactory are the most envied distinctions of this world, when the great Governor of all things shall take from you the capacity of enjoyment.

IF, hereafter you should be tempted to an undue solicitude for any temporal gratification, let this recollection abate the ardour of your desires. Consider, that what you have once proved to be incapable of affording satisfaction, and what sickness occasioned you to despise, cannot be worthy your pursuit, nor repay your sacrifice of duty and conscience. If you are now, through the mercy of God, blessed with a cheerful prospect of future health, and feel the vivacity of youth return with returning ease; yet, let me caution you, my dear reader, not to forget the gracious warning which this sickness was designed to enforce.

HAS it not afforded a confirmation of the uncertainty of that strength in which you rejoice? If you have been brought near to the gates of death, it was to admonish you to prepare to enter them: it was to remind you, that youth is no security from the grave; and if Providence has given you a present respite, it is with the intention of engaging you to be ready, whenever he shall see fit to summon you.

If your prayers were ardent in the season of pain, your thanksgivings should be in propor-

tion to the deliverance you have received. Yet, in general, it is to be feared, that the gratitude we feel for present enjoyments, is seldom proportioned to the energy of those supplications we offer up to God in the time of affliction. But surely, when you recollect the danger to which you have been lately exposed, and the obligations you owe to him who hath healed all your diseases; you will be induced to praise him for his mercies, and will suffer a grateful remembrance of his goodness to actuate your heart. Reflect, that although your days have been prolonged, they might have been protected in a state of weakness, which would have deprived you of the means of improvement, and rendered your existence a burden to yourself, and to all with whom you are connected: and though, in the most uncomfortable situation, we are bound to possess our souls in patience, and to acquiesce in the appointments of God; yet, we are undoubtedly engaged to peculiar knowledgments when our lot is distinguished by such particular favour.

How many, who, like you, have been afflicted, and still have experienced a continuation of their trials, in the distressful consequence of their distemper. Sometimes by such a weak

and debilitated constitution, as has rendered them incapable of fulfilling the common offices of life : sometimes by the loss of limbs, or deprivation of sight : or what is yet more dreadful, by weakening the mental powers, and reducing the wretched sufferer to the condition of an idiot. These, and many more evils, have been occasionally seen to follow the attacks of violent disorders : and if you, my dear reader, have been so happy as to escape them, through the mercy of Providence, endeavour to possess your mind with a lively sense of your high obligation, and to return the tribute of praise, “ not only with your lips, but in your life. Think, that you are now more immediately called upon to dedicate yourself to Heaven, and to offer to your God that being which he has preserved. Whatever have been your former transgressions, “ Go and sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.” Remember the resolutions you made in the time of sickness, and, by repeated recollection, renew the serious impressions which you then felt.

THE conduct of a Christian should be at *all* times regulated by the precepts of the Gospel ; but there are some seasons that occur, in which a

more than ordinary degree of religious attention seems to be necessary and becoming. The state in which you now are, when just recovered from a severe indisposition, may be properly esteemed a period, when every motive of propriety and duty call upon you to "consider your ways." You seem, as it were, to begin your existence anew, to be reinstated in the privileges, and again endued with the powers of life. Every function has been interrupted in its course to remind you, that all your abilities of action, and your capacity of usefulness, is derived from God; and that if he withhold his supporting aid, or suspend the operation of his usual influence, your whole system must suffer the most terrible effects: nor can any human assistance without his appointment, have the least efficacy to restore you.

It is God, therefore, who has again given you to enjoy the calm slumbers of uninterrupted rest; who has invigorated your nerves with strength, and re-animated your languid spirits with cheerful serenity. If you have once more an appetite to relish the blessing of wholesome food, to partake of the pleasure, and to feel the advantage of exercise; through each period of the day, or when you lie down to repose,

let every action you perform, and every enjoyment in which you are enabled to share, remind you of the value of health, and direct you to its constant improvement. If it is so uncertain, use it carefully while you possess the blessing; and let your soul expand with continual ejaculations of praise, to your all-gracious Preserver. Consider, how soon you may be again subject to disease: and let the idea of such a probable interruption to your duties and attainments, incite your utmost diligence to attend the business of the time before you.

THE term of your existence, will be sufficient for every necessary purpose if it be properly applied; but there is no season designed for waste, or idleness. The duties required of the sick and helpless, are patience and submission; but when God has restored you to a capacity of renewed exertion, he expects that you should be active and employed. Let no ill habits of indolence, and indulgence follow the unavoidable neglect which weakness has occasioned, but be assiduous to regain the time which is lost: and "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might," for, adds the royal teacher, "there

is no work, nor knowledge, nor device in the grave, whither thou art going."

ASSURED of the protection of infinite goodness, it will be of little importance whether the past hours have been spent in pain, or in delight. The memory of evil is forgotten, when it ceases to afflict : and though it may be grievous to have lost the space which you had designed for purposes of utility ; yet, he, who in mercy ordained such an interruption to your good intentions, can find many ways to supply to you this deprivation, if you be earnestly solicitous to employ the time which remains. Above all, my young friend, let this truth be established in your mind, that the divine assistance must ever co-operate with your exertions to render them effectual. " Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Such is your encouragement to apply to God, through the mediation of *Christ* ; and the more sensibly you feel your own weakness, the more it should dispose you to ask wisdom and strength of him, " who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not."

As you have been recovered from disease and danger, you may be certain you are reserved

to answer the wise dispensations of an overruling Providence; and it may be, you are spared to be an example of virtue and obedience to succeeding generations. You may be designed by Heaven to become one of those exalted characters, who shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation: to become the succour and support of merit discouraged by oppression; or the consolation of dejected poverty. You may be so happy as hereafter to sooth the melancholy hours of those parents, who lately watched beside your bed of languishing, and to repay, by your filial and grateful attentions to their declining age, the solicitude they have experienced for you.

As you have been restored to health, it will become your present state, to look forward with a pleasing hope of becoming useful, and of deserving esteem; and while you reflect on that mercy you are particularly called upon to commemorate, it should animate your heart to rely, without anxiety, on the future care of your heavenly Father; since he who has saved you from the ravages of sickness, can never want the power to deliver you from any distress in which you may hereafter be involved.

SUNDAY XXII.

ON GRATITUDE TO GOD.

THERE is a natural propensity in the human mind, to love and venerate those from whom we have received instances of kindness and affection : even such as are themselves deficient in proper acknowledgments to their benefactors, yet, join to condemn the appearance of ingratitude in others. But although the absence of this amiable principle excites a detestation of the character where we imagine it to be wanting ; still there are few minds so truly virtuous, as to consider with sufficient abhorrence that unthankfulness which we exercise toward the greatest and best of Beings,

THE relation in which we stand to our Creator, comprehends all that is supposed, to inspire obligation in the various connexions of life. As a subject, are you not accountable to that Being

who is the universal Sovereign of the Universe, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? and should you not cry to him, who, as the Prophet expresses it, "is your Father, and the Guide of your youth?" To his bounty you are indebted for all your various enjoyments; and your hopes of felicity, through time and eternity, must be derived from his inexhausted munificence.

If you are happy in the care and protection of your earthly parents, the affectionate endearments of fraternal love, or the kind attention of more distant relations, look up with gratitude to Him, from whose mercy all these blessings do originally flow. In every social enjoyment, consider his goodness as the source of your comfort: since the friends who thus delight, improve, and animate you by their converse, receive the power of pleasing from God, who is the fountain of all that is amiable in created excellence. While, therefore, you reap the benefit of their talents, and love them for their kindness; remember, my young reader, that you owe to your Creator that satisfaction which you experience in his creatures. Reflect also, on the past period of life, and you will be able to trace his goodness, even before the time that memory

can recollect. During the helpless season of infant weakness, his watchful care preserved you from evil, and led you in safety through a thousand accidents, which no human precaution could have prevented, nor wisdom less than infinite have foreseen. In every instance of danger within the reach of your remembrance, you may discover the concurrence of second causes, as guided by a merciful God for your preservation; and forget not, in the serious reflection upon such events, that every *fortunate circumstance* which attends the case, and prevents an additional calamity, is, in effect, the manifest exertion of Providence in your favour.

LET me earnestly recommend you, to exercise the pious habit of considering all the vicissitudes of your present state, as under the guidance and direction of a good and gracious God, who will order every circumstance as may best promote your ultimate advantage, if you disappoint not that design by wilful guilt.

IN no season of life are we sufficiently attentive to those obligations, which bind us to the great Preserver of men; but, in the volatile period of youth, it is too generally observed, that the order of events succeed each other, without

making any impression on the mind. Be assured, however, that the consideration which I now recommend to you, will not abate the cheerful spirits of juvenile ardour, nor damp the innocent vivacity of reasonable enjoyments; but will increase your pleasure, sanctify your comforts, and prove the solid foundation of lasting peace.

UNDER the influence of this grateful disposition, you will be encouraged to place your dependance on Almighty goodness, through all the remaining part of existence; and to taste the prosperous events of life with additional relish, under the sense of grateful obligation: neither will discontent embitter the mournful hour of adversity, while you confide in the protection of that God, who has fed you all your life long; but, from the affectionate recollection of former indulgence and support, you will derive sufficient reason to "trust in him at all times."

THERE are many situations, in which a generous mind, will be hurt at the necessity of receiving favours from others. When our benefactor is himself injured by the exertions of his kindness, no good heart could accept the benefit without reluctance. If an aged parent supply

the wants of his children, from such a scanty pittance as shall expose his declining years to uneasiness; and if, while he procure their comfort, he relinquish his own; though we may admire the sacrifice of paternal affection, the acceptance of the gift would sink the character of filial tenderness in our regard. But in our unbounded obligations to our Creator, the noblest feelings of sensibility have nothing to apprehend. The great Benefactor cannot be injured by his unlimited beneficence: all we have proceeds from his indulgence; and to enjoy his gifts, is to obey his will. Yet, while you are surrounded on every side by the multitude of his blessings, let not the Giver of them be hidden by the profusion of his own mercies.

THERE is a peculiar satisfaction suited to the mind of each individual, which, if we are not wanting to ourselves, will be found in every state; because the wisdom of the Divine government has allotted to each his proper sphere of action, and will bestow such internal supports on the wretched, as shall compensate for the want of those superfluities which may be denied them. But the most indigent owe their being, and the continuance of life, to Almighty goodness; and those who have, as far as relate to

outward circumstances, found a fairer lot, are indebted to his liberality, and not to their own skill for their enjoyments.

IF the daily provision of food and raiment demand from you the tribute of gratitude, you are equally engaged to be thankful for the blessings of education, and the cultivation of your mental powers. The use and pleasure which result from learning should be recollected with delight, and acknowledged as derived from Him, "who giveth wisdom liberally, and upbraideth not."

WHAT a new and extensive field of enjoyment opens to your imagination from this distinguished advantage! What a fund of satisfaction is in store for your future days, which would be unknown without the aid of instruction! What an agreeable addition is knowledge to all the comforts of prosperity! and in solitude and affliction, is it not our most amusing and consolatory recourse? It invigorates the judgment; strengthens the power of reason, and bestows that quick perception, which enables us to discern the right path of conduct. Above all, it renders us more serviceable to our fellow-creatures, by affording us the means to enlighten the ignorant, and to

direct those who stand in need of advice. It will be your own fault, my young friend, if you make not this noble use of the privilege you enjoy.

As Heaven has indulged you with the talent, you will be expected to improve it with gratitude; and the higher your attainments, the more you will become acquainted with your obligations to the Deity; since all the researches of knowledge display the wonders of his love to mankind, and manifest the contrivance of Infinite Wisdom for their advantage.

“O THAT men would therefore praise the Lord for his goodness, and declare the wonders that he doeth for the children of men!—Let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.—Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.”

SUNDAY XXIII.

ON GRATITUDE TO GOD.

“BE glad, then, ye children, and rejoice in the Lord your God!—for ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord, who hath dealt wondrously with you.”

THE only way properly to estimate your present comforts, is to consider how much you would lament the loss of them; and on this principle, reflect what misery would result from the deprivation of those things you are apt to esteem the most inconsiderable.

WHILE you are surrounded with the necessary supplies of daily food, you are entirely inattentive to the means by which it is procured; nor do you reflect on the dreadful consequence of scarcity. But if the Almighty Power, who

presides over the universe, and directs the revolving seasons in their course, should see fit to withhold "the former or the latter rain," so as to prevent the earth from yielding her increase, imagine, if you can, the evils that would follow.

THOSE who have never experienced the cravings of hunger, can form no idea of its horrors; but you may judge, in some degree, of its violence, from the terrible recital of its effect; and the pathetic description which is given of the famine in *Samaria*, may represent its misery to a susceptible mind. The sacred historian informs us, that during the reign of *Jehoram*, the son of *Ahab*, *Benhadad*, the king of *Syria*, went up and besieged *Samaria*; and, as a punishment for the sins of the people, he was suffered to prevail against them, and surrounded the city, so as to prevent the inhabitants from receiving their usual supply of provisions; which proved the occasion of such a severe famine, that those things which would have been despised, and accounted as refuse in a season of plenty, were esteemed valuable dainties in this calamitous period; "for an ass's head was sold for four-score pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of doves' dung, for five pieces of silver."

BUT even this miserable kind of sustenance was beyond the reach of the poor, who, destitute of riches, had no means to obtain any relief which might mitigate their agonies. They were therefore driven to the most shocking expedients to preserve life: "And as the king was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my Lord, O king! And he said, If the Lord do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or the wine-press?"

THE stores usually laid up in these repositories had been long exhausted therefore, the unhappy monarch had no means to relieve the necessity of his miserable petitioner. "And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy son, that we may eat him; and she hath hid her son."

THIS heart-piercing account is frequently perused with indifference, from the want of that attention which its subject demands. "It was

recorded for our admonition," and represents the most dreadful of all calamities, war and famine, as the consequence of disobedience to God. Yet the same Being still continues to preside over us, at this day, who was the Governor of the people of *Israel*. From him we receive the blessing of plenty, and every temporal gift, as well as moral endowments. His command can at any time "turn a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Consider, then, my young friend, while you are so happy as to rejoice in abundance, and may "eat bread to the full," that you should partake of the comforts of life with a thankful spirit, and at all times remember the Hand "who filleth all things living with plenteousness." Figure to yourself, what would be your situation, if you should be deprived of sustenance.

IN the melancholy picture above exhibited, and which has but too often been realized, you behold the rage of hunger surmounting every impulse of nature, and every tie of affection. One mother forgetting the force of parental love, and murdering her *own* son to support her existence; and another, though she hid her wretched offspring for his preservation, being perhaps satisfied for that moment by the dreadful ban-

quet which had relieved her exhausted frame ; who, had her distress been continued, would most likely also have yielded to the same deplorable necessity. With what transport must these wretched sufferers have hailed the next day's returning plenty, when the prophecy of *Elisha* was accomplished, and " a measure of fine flower sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gates of *Samaria*." This prediction appeared so incredible, from the desolate state of the afflicted city, that a " Lord on whose hand the king leaned," when it was pronounced, destitute of faith in the divine promise, and perceiving no probable means to occasion such an event, replied with indignant contempt, " Behold, if the Lord would make windows in heaven might this thing be !" intimating his doubt of the possibility of the fact. He considered (as too many are apt to do) the supply of provisions as depending solely on *natural* causes ; but, as an *Israelite*, he surely might have remembered, that the arm of *Jehovah* had frequently controlled the order of nature for the preservation of his people. And justly did he suffer for his disbelief in the word of infinite truth, by " seeing the abundance with his eyes," without being permitted to eat of it.

THE period of such miraculous interposition is now past; but the production of vegetables, the multiplied increase of grain, and the astonishing formation of animals, continue to indicate the same goodness, and to proclaim the same Almighty Power. Remember that his wisdom still guides the various occurrences of life: and in every social meal, recollect, that you are under a new obligation to his Providence, who ordered such unnumbered causes to work together, to produce that food which sustains you.

“Give glory now, therefore, to the Lord your God because he causeth darkness,” by removing your present enjoyments; and while you have the power of acknowledgment; “before your feet stumble on the dark mountains,” and, your gratitude is prevented from its exertions, “by the sudden shadow of death.”

THE blessings of abundance are not in themselves less valuable for their uninterrupted continuance. If, with a design of serving a fellow-creature, you had engaged in a long series of benevolent actions, would you regard the debt of gratitude as cancelled by the addition of re-

peated favours? Yet this is exactly the case with respect to our obligations to the Deity. If he withdraws the bountiful provision which relieves our necessities, we return in penitent supplication to his throne; we ardently implore the renewal of his mercies, and grievously lament the folly which has procured such a severe visitation. But would it not be wiser, and indicate a nobler principle of action, to regard the value of divine indulgence during the season of its enjoyment, and while we rejoice in his gifts, express the praise which they deserve? Such a conduct would diffuse a pleasing satisfaction through every scene of life; it would increase the value of your ordinary comforts by the remembrance of him who bestowed them; and, as gratitude is one of the purest and most exalted sentiments of the mind, it would enlarge your best affections, contribute to harmonize your temper, and induce you to an imitation of that munificent goodness of that Being, "who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Forget not, therefore, in your intercourse with the world, that God is your preserver, and must at all times be the object of your veneration; for, "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised."

SUNDAY XXIV.

ON GRATITUDE TO GOD.

I HOPE, my young reader, that you are convinced of the propriety of that duty which has been recommended in the two preceding lectures; and that your innocent heart is ready to expand with grateful praise, for the continued instances of Almighty Goodness. Those instances are so many, and so various, that it is impossible to recount their number, or trace their effects: and so insensibly do they combine together in the promotion of our happiness, that, as I before remarked, we are only conscious of their value (I might almost say of their possession) when our blessings are interrupted by some misfortune.

WHEN the blood flows in its proper course through the various channels prepared for that purpose by your kind Creator, or when you

draw, without intermission, the easy breath of health, does it occur to your thoughts, that no human power can for a moment continue the circulation of that fluid through your veins? and that although it is liable to be obstructed by the most trifling accident; yet, sickness or death is frequently the consequence of such an interruption?

You cannot, it is true, understand the wonderful anatomy of the human frame; but if you was acquainted with its minute and delicate structure, and how many of those small vessels it contains, your mind would be astonished, that this vital current should so regularly flow, and its progress be so seldom stopped. Nor can you imagine what dreadful sufferings are occasioned by those disorders which affect the breath, and the difficulty that would, in such a case, attend your respiration. In short, though every function of the human body, (if in its proper state) is performed with such ease, as to require no immediate thought for its exertion; yet the least alteration in any one particular, would be sufficient to convince you of the necessity of divine attention, and the importance of those parts which seem, comparatively, to be less essential.

PERHAPS, my young friend, you have been so happy as never to have experienced any acute disorder; and if such has been your uninterrupted enjoyment, you can form no adequate idea of those anxious wishes for returning ease which agitate the sufferer on the bed of sickness, and in the hour of anguish: nor can you conceive that degree of grateful remembrance which enlivens the heart during the first transports of restored health. Happy would it be, if the animated impressions were of longer continuance; but such pious emotions wear off, as the blessing becomes established, and are totally forgotten in its continuance.

THIS truth you have experienced who have felt the langour of weakness, or the assaults of pain; and few there are so robust, as never to have known the attacks of disease; since there are some disorders peculiar to the season of youth, and which are sufficiently violent to instruct them in the sensations of pain, and remind them of mortality. Endeavour, therefore, to strengthen your mind in the exercise of gratitude, by the recollection of what you *then* felt; and forget not to renew those sentiments in health, which were so powerful in the time of sickness. For, surely, you can want no convic-

tion, that God is able at this instant to cause your frame to relapse into the same disorder, or to afflict you with one more severe : and therefore, though “ God may not be in all your thoughts,” yet are you continually under his guidance. He guards you with his watchful care when you are sunk into sleeping insensibility. Should you not, therefore, most ardently commend yourself to his protection, before you “ give sleep to your eyes or slumber to your eyelids.”

EVERY moment of continued health, or prolonged life, depends on the will of your Creator ; and when you see so many objects of distress suffering around you, remember, that it affords no cause for exultation ; but should inspire a spirit of humility in the consideration that you are liable to the same evils, and that for the advantage of a better constitution, not unto you, not unto any mortal power, but unto your preserving God should be the praise.

It is sometimes seen, that the vivacity of youth is apt to be displeased with those who are rendered more serious by a state of continued indisposition : and some there are (with concern

do I make the observation) who can treat, with contemptuous ridicule, those misfortunes, which, adding deformity to inconvenience and pain, make the unhappy objects deserving of peculiar pity.

BUT let them blush for shame at a meanness of conduct, which bespeaks the heart to be at once ungenerous, inhuman, ungrateful, and impious: for surely, no person of true generosity would reproach or deride those defects which cannot arise from error or guilt in the afflicted sufferer, and in regard to which they must be entirely passive: nor is it more consistent with the gentle feelings of humanity, to increase the bitterness of unavoidable affliction, by the sarcastic triumph of boasted superiority. If there is any conduct which may be justly charged with ingratitude, it must be in that unworthy use of divine endowments, which would endeavour to mortify the less happy. To such minds may we direct the emphatical enquiry of the apostle on another occasion, "What hast thou that thou hast not received? and who made thee to differ from another?" And what a disingenuous disposition does it indicate to be proud of the favours of Providence, and yet despise those whom that *same* Providence has depressed! It adds,

therefore, the crime of impiety to the black catalogue we have enumerated; because it is in effect a censure of the divine administration, whose wisdom has thought fit so to order the *condition* of his creatures; and who bestows beauty and strength, or allots deformity and weakness, as best suits with the plan of his all-gracious government. Whoever, therefore, can allow themselves thus to ridicule the unhappy, should reflect on the evil consequence, and the guilt which is attendant on such an inconsiderate habit. Let me warn you, my young reader, to consider these important arguments above suggested, and neither by your countenance nor example, give a sanction to a behaviour, so entirely inconsistent with the spirit of that faith you profess, or of that Master whose name you bear.

THE blessings of your heavenly Father are to be received with thanksgiving, not as an absolute gift, which can excite any pride in the possessor, but as a sacred talent deposited in your hands, to be improved to the valuable purpose of promoting your own happiness and the pleasure of others. But in the disposition of his mercies, he has reserved to himself the right of resuming

them whenever he shall judge it proper ; either to correct your failings, excite a stronger sense of his goodness, or as a trial of your fortitude and resignation.

IN every state, the will of God must determine the duration of your comforts ; but if you wish to deserve their continuance, it must be by an humble and thankful enjoyment of them ; by a constant recollection from whence they proceed ; and by a diligent improvement of every advantage, whether natural or acquired, whether temporal or spiritual, to the increase of benevolent affections towards your fellow-creatures, and of sincere piety and gratitude to the Deity.

SUNDAY XXV.

ON THE BLESSINGS OF REDEMPTION.

I MUST again, my young friend, entreat the favour of your candid attention, while I renew the important subject of gratitude to God. Hitherto we have considered only such obligations as respect the present life; let us now extend our views to those more important instances of his goodness, which “has blessed us in heavenly things in *Christ Jesus*,” and which, through his merits and intercession, has opened us a way to salvation and glory.

THE happiness or misery of the present state, must soon terminate in death; and therefore good and evil are indiscriminately the portion of the just and unjust; because we are assured in the gospel of truth, that after the conclusion of this scene of trial there will come a day, in

which God will judge the world in righteousness by him whom he hath appointed : whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, " in that he hath raised him from the dead."

ON the solemn consideration of eternal judgment, the interest of this world seems to be diminished ; nor can the concerns of such a precarious situation be worthy our regard, in comparison with that awful state to which we are hastening.

THE Almighty Creator has given to all his rational creatures a perfect law for their direction ; and, in the power of conscience (as we have before observed) has afforded them a certain light, even in the darkest ages. But this divine law has been transgressed by the whole human race ; for which cause, in the words of the apostle, " God has concluded us all under sin ;" or, as it may be explained, God is now assured, that every one has been guilty of some transgression of this moral law, and, therefore, deserves the punishment which he denounced on their disobedience.

To bring the case home to your heart, let me ask you whether you have not many times been

guilty of wilful sin? and, in the recollection of what has been amiss in your actions, do you not feel ashamed of your crimes and afraid of the just judgment of your God?

THERE is no man that liveth, and sinneth not." The very best of the human race have incurred the penalty due to transgressors; and you, my dear reader, must be convinced, that if the Almighty should enter into strict judgment with you, it is not possible that in his sight you could be justified. Could you reply, in the presence of the Great Searcher of hearts, that you had never broken any of his commands? Have you not, on the contrary, offended him by the violation of truth, or by various instances of pride and anger? By a disobedient and negligent conduct toward your parents, or by profanation of his sabbath?

IN some respect or other, as "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;" that is, of obedience to his laws, you must be conscious that you justly deserve the punishment of divine displeasure; for whatever may have been the nature, circumstances, or aggravation of your sins, they have been committed against the prohibition of your Maker; and "whosoever,"

says St. *James*, "shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all: for he that said, do not commit adultery, said also, do not kill: now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law."

CAN any words more clearly infer, that it matters not in what *particular* you have offended, because *every* sin is displeasing to a Being of infinite righteousness, and, without some atonement must incur the dreadful sentence of future misery. If, therefore, you cannot but allow, that you are highly indebted to the mercy of God for the comforts and supports of this life, what returns of gratitude can equal your obligation for the nobler manifestation of his love, in releasing you from the dominion of sin, and the fear of eternal death; and through *Christ*, reconciling you unto himself, not imputing unto you your trespasses. For, if pain and anguish is bitter when you know that it must soon have an end, and if distress can only be supported by the hope of future joy; reflect on the dreadful consequence of that awful judgment which shall continue the tortures of guilt without intermission, and which affords no comfortable expectation either of relief or conclusion.

THOUGH the final sentence that awaits the impenitent sinner may not at present affect your mind as it ought, yet allow me, my dear, young friend, with that solemn earnestness which the subject deserves, to press the following argument on your consideration. If you can recollect your dissipated thoughts, suppose for a moment that you were summoned by death before the awful tribunal of God; and at this period, while you are reading this page, an account were demanded of all the actions of your past life, can you truly say, that such a solemn event would not fill you with terror? Should you not be afraid of that future and unknown state into which death will admit you; And does not your heart tremble at the idea of that tremendous, though unavoidable hour, when you shall hear the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God, and "when you shall be raised incorruptible," to "receive the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil?"

THERE would be sufficient cause for this terror, and for the dread of future retribution even to the most virtuous, but that now "God has sent his Son into the world that all who believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." For he has reconciled us to his Father by the

undoubted criterion. "He that hath my commandments, and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth me; and he that loveth *me* shall be loved of my *Father*, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him."

you wish his costly benefits, and will you not remember his benefits? Has he given his only Son to die for you, to expiate your sins, to reconcile you to himself, and will you not adore that benefactor, who thus crowns you with mercy and loving kindness? Will you disregard the benevolent design of your suffering Saviour, by a continuance in sin, when he spared not his life, but submitted himself for your sake, to a violent death upon the cross? He his stripes we are healed; and does his voluntary humiliation claim no gratitude from the creatures for whom he shed his blood?

There is a tribute of acknowledgment which is in your power, and which he will certainly receive as a thankful return, as the only acceptable return for all that he has done and suffered. It is, that you should follow his steps. He has made it the test of your regard, "If you love me keep my commandments; and your gratitude to God is to be expressed by the same

SUNDAY XXVI.

ON TRUST IN GOD.

THE virtues have such a mutual connexion and dependance on each other, that it is almost impossible to possess any good quality in an eminent degree, without its correspondent affection. Thus filial tenderness will naturally produce filial obedience; which is the parent of submission, meekness, and a thousand amiable propensities. In like manner, the vices and passions of the human mind associate, if I may so express it, with each other. Sullenness is disposed to resentment and ill-will, and avarice will effectually harden the heart, and render it selfish, uncharitable, and suspicious. Of such importance is it to cultivate *every* principle of duty, and that "he that thinketh he standeth, should take heed lest he fall."

THOSE who disregard the exertions of Divine Providence for their support; who, like the negli-

gent *Israelites*, in their passage through the wilderness, only “eat and drink, and then rise up to play,” are apt to distrust that heavenly protection which they so ill deserve. They perpetually exclaim, with the repining anxiety of the people above mentioned, “Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord, in the land of *Egypt*, when we sat by the flesh-pots, and when we did eat bread to the full! They were unmindful of the miraculous supplies of that Almighty hand which had “drawn water out of the stony rock,” to allay their thirst, and who, on this occasion, again gratified their lustful appetites, and “fed them with quails from heaven.”—May you, my young friend, animated with a constant sense of gratitude to your Omnipotent Preserver, rely with full assurance on his unremitted care: secure, on this sacred anchor of inspiring hope, “that he who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, shall with him, also, freely give us all things.”

As it is not owing to your solicitude that you have been hitherto supported, consider that in every prospect of future life you will be equally dependent on the same Protector. “His hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,” although

your difficulties should multiply with increasing years. Nor will "his ear be heavy, that it cannot hear" the softest whispers of supplication. Never, therefore, suffer your youthful heart to be depressed with the fear of impending evil; for, "though your father and mother forsake you, yet the Lord will take you up;" and in the same high strain of pious confidence the royal psalmist proceeds with an encouraging observation, "I have been young, and now am old, yet saw I never the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread." He does not mean that the children of the virtuous are never found in a state of honest poverty; but that they will on no occasion eat the bread of idleness; and that, as "the hand of the diligent maketh rich, so a little that the righteous hath is better than the possessions of many wicked."

THE great business of human life is to pursue the path of duty in every varying state, and through all the changes and chances either of prosperity or adversity, to endeavour, by unshaken virtue, to secure the favour of God. Your interest, in respect to time and eternity, is equally safe in the guardian care of your heavenly Father; his government is extended beyond the limits of the grave; and though death will shut your

eyes to the scenes they are accustomed to contemplate, yet you will awake in regions, which, though *now unknown*, are alike supported by his providence, and protected by his love. Be assured, therefore, that virtue is the "one thing needful," and that all the events of life shall, if that be secured, *so work together as to produce your final good.*

HOWEVER weak may be your present attainments, there appears to be some time before you for improvement; but as the youngest cannot be secure of life, you should not delay a moment the great preparation for eternity. Trust in God, and he will assist you with his grace; and the more you solicit and improve its influence, the more readily will he dispense it to your necessities. And though, as a trial of your faith, he may suffer your virtue to be assaulted by temptation, yet still *trust in God*, for he will not lay more upon you than he will enable you to bear; and every exercise of your faith, though at present it may seem painful and distressing, shall increase the glory of your celestial crown. The more difficulties you find in a course of religious duty, the more it should inspire you to rely upon that Almighty arm, which is a strong shield of defence to all who implore its aid.

LET me in conclusion remind you, that the watchful eye of your Saviour and Judge is ever observant of your actions, ever ready to assist and relieve your wants, and his benevolence will cherish those good impressions which rise in your soul, if you endeavour to encourage their wholesome admonitions. In every scene of temptation and danger, consider him as your support, as having the most anxious interest in your conduct, and well acquainted with all the weaknesses of your frame. The Saviour, "who was in all points tempted like as we are," is able to succour them who struggle with the difficulties of a probationary state. He pities, and will assist those who are engaged in that spiritual warfare, of which he is the triumphant commander.

"The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering" and, therefore, can suit his assistance to all the exigencies of his followers. In the wilderness he was assailed by the grand seducer of men, in many various forms of temptation. All the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them was the bait proposed to his ambition. But his example has left you the proper answer to every irregular inclination: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve." However inclined by internal suggestions, or solicited by external

allurements, you are taught to overcome the attacks of every licentious principle, by the remembrance of your duty to God, and trust in him, that he will never desert you in the attempt to obey his commands.

SET forward then, my young friend, in the path of life, with the generous design of aiming at every thing that is great, manly, and generous; and if your feet should sometimes deviate into error or guilt, be not so far discouraged as to continue in the practice of evil, but by an immediate repentance, endeavour to obtain reconciliation with your God. "From him cometh every good and perfect gift." You can do nothing entirely of yourself, but all things through *Christ*, who will strengthen you. Be strong, therefore, in the Lord, who will assist your pious purpose of devoting these early days to his service: go forth in the power of his might, determined to surmount the opposition of a vain and wicked world. In that world you are now placed, with the power to decide for yourself, whether you will enlist under the banner of *vice*, or in the defence of *virtue*. Hitherto you have, as it were, been *neuter*, while under the eye of your parents, and guarded by their protection; but the time is approaching, and is in some instances arrived, when you must establish your character with mankind.

YOUR passions gather strength with increasing years ; your temptations to evil will multiply from the influence of bad example ; and you must now either add to the number of the vicious, by a conformity to their conduct ; or, by a firm perseverance in the cause of religion and goodness, become the delight of your parents, the pride of your country, and the approved servant of your heavenly Master. The situation in which you are placed is of no importance, since every station has its allotted duties ; to the proper discharge of which a future recompence is promised, through the mercy of God.

IF your trust in Providence is the affiance which he requires, you will not murmur or repine at any condition he shall see fit to ordain ; but will believe that the state assigned you on earth, is that which is best suited to promote your present improvement and future felicity. The plans of Infinite Wisdom comprehend every period of your existence, and are connected with causes and events beyond the reach of human penetration. As you advance in life, you will discern, from reflection and experience, that the power of an Almighty, though invisible Ruler, can turn the most adverse incidents into occasions of rejoicing, and that the gratification of your most ardent wish, will not bestow happi-

ness, if it be not accompanied with the blessing of heaven. But if you desire to pass through the vicissitudes of your pilgrimage with serenity and satisfaction, endeavour, my young friend, to secure an interest in his favour, who can make all things work together for good to them who love him. His friendship will evince your worth to the assembled universe, and confer immortal fame when all the distinctions of sublunary ambition are passed away and forgotten.

TITLES and honours may now be lavished on the undeserving, but those who can obtain the approbation of the searcher of hearts, will be proved the successful candidates for a crown of immortality. Trust, therefore, in God, that as he has certainly placed you in the sphere best adapted to your capacity and power, so he will assist you with every needful supply of his grace, to co-operate with your pious inclinations and exertions in his service. And, as he could not be supposed to create any being but with a design to make it happy, be assured, that it will be through your own neglect and impenitence, if you fail of obtaining that noble reward which remaineth for the people of God.

THE END.

